

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack the FAA did exactly the right thing. They immediately prohibited all aircraft operations over the United States with the exception of the military. General prohibition was lifted in part on September 13th, but in the Washington metropolitan area civil aircraft remained grounded. On October 4th limited air carrier operations were permitted at Reagan National Airport. On October 5th limited VFR and IFR operations within 18 to 25 NM from DCA VOR were permitted. Later full airline operations were permitted at Washington National Airport. This suggests that the biggest threats to the Washington area - the jet airliners - are under control and safely permitted. But the small general aviation airplanes which have NEVER been demonstrated to be a threat are still being severely penalized in the Washington area. I recognise that the FAA Administrator was under some considerable political pressure to "do something" about these little airplanes because of the hysteria in the press.

We now know that small airplanes never have been and are not likely to ever be a danger to national security or any of our national buildings. So the FAA has to eventually recognise this and give back the freedom to fly in all of our airports in the Washington area that are presently severely restricted. These airports are small and incapable of handling the kind of airplanes that do pose a threat to national security. I suggest strongly that you (the FAA) could start by completely opening the VFR corridor between DCA and Baltimore, and making the operations at the 3 airports in question less burdensome.

Then, in steps, as I know the political process will require, remove the restrictions one by one until these airports and their airplanes have the same access that they had before the September 11th attack. Everybody in the industry knows these airplanes and they know that they are not a threat. So the problem is just how to politically get out of the problem that has been created. I think that a steady withdrawal from the control of these airports until they are back to normal is the only reasonable thing to do.

So at first the FAA did exactly the right thing. Now the FAA, TSA, Secret Service et al are doing exactly the wrong thing and we need to make a target correction.